

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 PA-02 PRS-01 USIA-15 FEA-01

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R 181728Z OCT 77

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2372

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY VIENNA

ERDA WASHDC

ERDA GERMANTOWN

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USIAEA

USOECN ALSO FOR EMBASSY

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TAGS: ENRG, TECH, GW

SUBJECT: GERMAN GOVERNMENT REPORT ON FAST BREEDER
PROGRAM

REF: BONN 9058

1. SUMMARY. GERMAN MINISTER FOR RESEARCH AND
TECHNOLOGY (BMFT), MATTHOEFER, SUBMITTED A DETAILED
REPORT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SODIUM COOLED FAST
BREEDER REACTOR TO THE PARLIAMENTARY (BUNDESTAG) BUDGET
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COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE FOR RESEARCH AND
TECHNOLOGY. THIS WAS IN RESPONSE TO A REQUEST FOR
A THOROUGH INVESTIGATION OF THE FAST BREEDER
TECHNOLOGY, BEFORE APPROVAL FOR FURTHER FUNDING OF
THE FAST BREEDER REACTOR LINE COULD BE GIVEN (SEE
REFTELLM END SUMMARY.

2. THE 160-PAGE REPORT HAS CHAPTERS ON:

1. INTRODUCTION
2. IMPORTANCE OF THE FAST BREEDER FOR THE FUTURE
ENERGY SUPPLY
3. ECONOMIC ASPECTS
4. SAFETY ASPECTS
5. PLUTONIUM AND NON-PROLIFERATION PROBLEMS
6. DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN MARKET OPPORTUNITIES
- ANNEX 1: DEVELOPMENTS AND INITIAL RESULTS OF
KALKAR SNR-300 BREEDER REACTOR.
- ANNEX 2: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION BETWEEN SBK-RWE
(GERMANY), EDF (FRANCE), AND ENEL (ITALY).
- ANNEX 3: INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS OF DEBENE
(GOVERNMENT, INDUSTRY, RESEARCH CENTERS) IN THE AREA OF
SODIUM COOLED FAST BREEDERS.
- ANNEX 4: LIST OF THE MOST IMPORTANT AGREEMENTS IN
THE AREA OF FAST BREEDER REACTORS.

3. IN THE INTRODUCTION, MINISTER MATTHOEFER ADDRESSES
THE NEED FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FAST BREEDER
REACTOR, IN VIEW OF THE LIMITED KNOWN URANIUM
RESOURCES. THE REPORT NOTES THAT THE LIMITED DOMESTIC
URANIUM DEPOSITS, UTILIZED IN FAST BREEDER REACTORS,
HAVE AN ENERGY VALUE EQUIVALENT TO THAT OF THE
GERMAN COAL DEPOSITS OR OF THE LIBYAN OIL FIELDS.
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FURTHERMORE, IT NOTES, FAST BREEDERS COULD CONSUME
DEPLETED LWR-FUEL. IT NOTES THAT ALL EXISTING FAST
BREEDER PROGRAMS EMPLOY SODIUM COOLING, LEADING TO
STRONG INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. THE EXPERIMENTAL
FAST BREEDER REACTOR KNK RECEIVED 100 PERCENT FEDERAL
FUNDING; THE SNR-300, CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION AT
KALKAR, WITH BELGIAN AND DUTCH PARTICIPATION, RECEIVES
ONLY 65 PERCENT FEDERAL FUNDING; THE DEMONSTRATION
REACTOR SNR-2 (APPR. 1200 MWE) WILL REQUIRE LESS THAN
10 PERCENT GOVERNMENT CONTRIBUTION BECAUSE OF INCREASED
INDUSTRIAL INVOLVEMENT AND ADDITIONAL PARTICIPATION OF
FRANCE.

4. MATTHOEFER DENIES THAT THE FAST BREEDER POSES A
GREATER RISK THAN CURRENT REACTOR TYPES, POINTING TO
THE LONG EXPERIENCE WITH FAST BREEDER PROTOTYPES IN
THE U.S., FRANCE, BRITAIN AND THE USSR. HE CLAIMS THAT
A FAST BREEDER ECONOMY WOULD EVEN REDUCE THE PLUTONIUM
RISK, BECAUSE, FROM AN ECOLOGICAL POINT OF VIEW, THE
RECYCLING OF THE PLUTONIUM WAS THE SAFEST AND MOST
SOPHISTICATED WAY TO DISPOSE OF THIS HAZARDOUS MATERIAL.
TURNING TO THE PROLIFERATION ASPECT, MATTHOEFER DIS-

COUNTS THE POSSIBILITY THAT TERRORISTS CAN ACQUIRE

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PLUTONIUM AND USE IT AS A NUCLEAR EXPLOSIVE, BECAUSE
THE TECHNOLOGICAL REQUIREMENTS WERE TOO GREAT. ON
THE OTHER HAND, HE ARGUES, ALL NATIONS EMPLOYING THE
LWR TECHNOLOGY HAVE READY ACCESS TO PLUTONIUM AND THUS
THE PROLIFERATION RISK WOULD NOT BE INCREASED CON-
SIDERABLY BY THE FAST BREEDER DEVELOPMENT.

5. THE REPORT NOTES THAT IN THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS THE
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS SPENT SOME DM 3 BILLION FOR FAST
BREEDER R AND D, CONDUCTED BY ALKEM (HANAU), INTERATOM
(BENSBERG) AND GFK (KARLSRUHE). FOR 1977-80 AN ANNUAL
AMOUNT OF DM 370 MILLION WILL BE PROVIDED FOR THE
CONSTRUCTION OF SNR-300 AND ACCOMPANYING R AND D.
ORIGINAL BMFT PLANS HAD CALLED FOR ANNUALLY DM 100
MILLION FOR STUDIES ON THE LATER COMMERCIALIZATION OF
THE FAST BREEDER. THESE FUNDS HAVE BEEN FROZEN BY THE
PARLIAMENTARY INTERVENTION (SEE REFTEL). MATTHOEFER
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WARNS THAT SUCH A CHANGE IN POLICY

-- WOULD LEAVE CORRESPONDING R AND D CONDUCTED
AT GFK ALMOST MEANINGLESS

-- WOULD SERIOUSLY QUESTION THE UTILITY OF THE
SNR-300 PROJECT, BECAUSE A REASONABLE
EVALUATION OF ITS OPERATION WOULD NOT BE
POSSIBLE.

-- WOULD ELIMINATE THE BASIS FOR INTERNATIONAL
COOPERATION.

6. IN HIS CLOSING STATEMENTS MATTHOEFER STRESSES THAT
THE FUNDS WHICH ARE CURRENTLY UNDER DISCUSSION ARE OF
VITAL IMPORTANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE FAST BREEDER
TECHNOLOGY, ALTHOUGH THEIR FINANCIAL SHARE OF THE
OVERALL FAST BREEDER FUND WAS ALMOST NEGLIGIBLE. HE
STATES THAT A POSITIVE DECISION WOULD NOT ANTICIPATE
A DECISION ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE DEMONSTRATION
REACTOR SNR-2 - SUCH A DECISION HAS TO BE MADE BY THE
PARLIAMENT (BUNDESTAG), AND ONLY AFTER SOME YEARS OF
EXPERIENCE WITH SNR-300, CERTAINLY NOT BEFORE
1982/83.

7. EMBASSY HAS POUCHED A COPY OF THE COMPLETE REPORT
TO OES/NET.
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